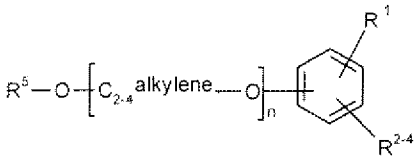
IN THE CLAIMS

1. (currently amended): **[A]** In a process for the preparation of an oligonucleotide ~~which comprises the~~ by assembly of ~~an~~ the oligonucleotide attached to a solid support, the improvement wherein the solid support is prepared by ~~a process comprising~~ polymerisation of a monomer which comprises a protected hydroxypolyC_{2-4} alkyleneoxy chain attached to a polymerisable unit wherein the protected hydroxypolyC_{2-4} alkyleneoxy chain contains from 2 to 10 C_{2-4} alkyleneoxy groups and wherein the hydroxypolyC_{2-4} alkyleneoxy chain is protected with ~~an acid-labile protecting group, preferably an optionally substituted trityl~~ a poly-aryl methane protecting group.

2. (original): A process according to claim 1, wherein the solid support is prepared by a ~~process comprising~~ polymerisation of a monomer of the following formula ~~(1)~~



wherein
R^1 is an optionally substituted ethylene group;
R^{2-4} are independently hydrogen, hydrocarbyl, halogen, or hydrocarbyloxy;
R^5 is an optionally substituted trityl group; and
n is 2 to 10.

3. (original): A process according to claim 2, wherein R^1 is para to the group of formula R^5-O-[C_{2-4}alkylene-O]-, R^1 is an unsubstituted ethylene group, R^{2-4} are each H, the C_{2-4} alkylene group is $-CH_2CH_2-$ and n is 4.

4. (currently amended): A process according to claim 1, wherein the ~~polymerisation occurs under conditions to produce cross-linking~~ support is crosslinked.

5. (currently amended): A process according to claim 1, wherein the oligonucleotide is assembled by ~~the~~ phosphoramidite ~~approach~~ chemistry.

6. (previously presented): A process according to claim 1, wherein the oligonucleotide is attached to the solid support via a cleavable linker.

7. (original): A process according to claim 6, wherein the cleavable linker is a succinyl, oxalyl or trityl linker.

8. (previously presented): A process according to claim 1, further comprising cleaving the oligonucleotide from the solid support.

9. (original): A process according to claim 8, wherein the oligonucleotide is deprotected prior to, concomitant with, or after, cleavage from the solid support.

10. (currently amended): A composition of matter having the formula:

Ps-Z-Q

wherein:

Ps represents a polymer obtained by ~~a process comprising~~ polymerisation of a monomer which comprises a protected hydroxypolyC_{2-4} alkyleneoxy chain attached to a polymerisable unit wherein the protected hydroxypolyC_{2-4} alkyleneoxy chain contains from 2 to 10 C_{2-4} alkyleneoxy groups and ~~wherein the hydroxypolyC_{2-4} alkyleneoxy chain~~ is protected with ~~an acid-labile protecting group, preferably an optionally substituted trityl~~ a poly-aryl methane protecting group;

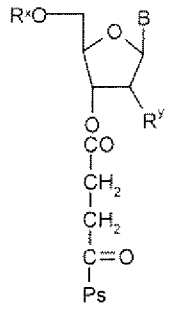
Z represents a single bond or a cleavable linker; and

Q represents H, ~~a protecting group,~~ a nucleoside or an oligonucleotide, provided that Q is not H when Z represents a single bond.

11. (original): A composition of matter according to claim 10, wherein Z is a group of the formula $-Y^2-L-Y^3$, wherein Y^2 represents a single bond, -C(O)-, $-C(O)NR^{17}-$ or -C(O)O-, Y^3 represents a single bond, -C(O)-, $-C(O)NR^{17}-$, $-NR^{17}-C(O)-$, -C(O)O-, -O-C(O)-, $-NR^{17}-$ or -O-, R^{17} is -H, a substituted or unsubstituted aliphatic group or a substituted or unsubstituted aromatic group and L is a bridging group.

12. (original): A composition of matter according to claim 11, wherein L is a C_{2-4} alkylene group.

13. (original): A composition of matter according to claim 12 of the formula:



wherein R^x is an acid labile protecting group, R^y is H, F, allyl, OMe, OCH_2CH_2OMe, or hydroxy protected by a base labile or silyl-protecting group, and B is H, a protected adenine, guanine, or cytosine moiety or an optionally protected thymine, uracil or hypoxanthine moiety.

14. (new): The process of claim 1 wherein the protecting group is a trityl group, a dimethoxytrityl group or a 2-chlorotrityl group.

15. (new): The composition of matter of claim 10 wherein the protecting group is a trityl group, a dimethoxytrityl group or a 2-chlorotrityl group.